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UNCLAS KINSHASA 000338

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MONUC SUCCESSFULLY DISARMS ITURI MILITIAS
THREATENING CIVILIANS

REF: A. KINSHASA 330

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 337

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. On February 23 a contingent of 350 Nepalese peacekeepers encircled a camp of armed militia who were threatening civilians in Ari Wara, Northern Ituri. The peacekeepers convinced the militia members to peacefully give up approximately 250 weapons and join Ituri's demobilization and community reintegration program. Initial satisfaction with this successful operation has been tempered by the subsequent killing of nine peacekeepers in another part of Ituri (reftels.) End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) A contingent of 350 Nepalese peacekeepers deployed February 23 to Ari Wara in Northern Ituri to confront a group of well-armed militia from the Popular Armed Forces of the Congo (FAPC) who were threatening civilians. The local population had been upset with FAPC over their role in the killing of a local businessman on the weekend of February 20, and decided to take arms by force from the local police to confront the militia themselves. (Note: The local police are weak and afraid to confront militias. End Note.) MONUC sources said peacekeepers intervened to prevent a confrontation in which the militias would likely have killed many civilians.

[1](#)3. (U) The MONUC source said the peacekeepers encircled FAPC's main militia camp in Ari Wara and demanded that the militia members disarm. After negotiating with them for some time, they convinced the entire 111 militia members in the camp to lay down their arms and join Ituri's disarmament program. Peacekeepers collected over 250 weapons of different sorts from the militia camp. MONUC also agreed to transport the militia members' families with them (350 in total) to the Mahagi Transit Center. The three individuals alleged to have killed the businessman, however, remain at large.

Comment

[1](#)4. (U) MONUC officials are rightly pleased with this effective use of their Chapter VII mandate, although these positive feelings have been tempered by the subsequent killing of nine peacekeepers in another part of Ituri. FAPC militias are, after all, one of the best armed and trained groups in Ituri. Peacekeepers not only defused a dangerous situation in which militias were threatening civilians, they also disarmed the militias without using force and persuaded them to join a demobilization program along with their families. The success of this operation in the troubled district of Ituri is encouraging and it points to a more effective strategy on the part of MONUC involving not only the threat of force, but a willingness to negotiate and persuade militias to disarm and demobilize peacefully.

[1](#)5. (U) Bujumbura minimized considered.

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